8. An operation cell to deal with terrorist activities has been created in Delhi Police.

9. Steps are under consideration to equip Delhi Police with more modern weapons.

Illegal acquisition of Indian Passports by Bangladeshis

*257. SHRI KAPIL VERMA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Govenment's attention has been drawn to the allegation made by a Legislator of Bombay that a Large number of Bangladeshis are surreptitously acquiring Indian Passports with the connivance of unscrupluous agents and passport officials and that such Bangladeshis in large number are reaching Bombay, besides Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi; and

(b) whether Government have enquired into the matter, if so, what are the findings in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI B. R. BHAGAT) :(a) The Government of India is not aware of any large number of Bangladeshis acquiring surreptitiously Indian Passports. There were two cases recently when passports were issued to persons who were supposedly Bangladeshi nationals. This information was already given to the Honourable House on 22nd of August (Unstarred Question No. 2650). In both these cases the Passports were subsequently revoked as soon as it come to light that there were reasons to believe that they were not Indian nationals.

(b) Central Passport Organisation, Ministry of External Affairs is concerned with the issue of travel documents to Indian nationals, whenever applications are received for issue of passports, enquiries are made from the concerned police authorities for *inter alia* the following :—

1. Identity.
2. Nationality.
3. Security.
4. whether there are any criminal charges against the individual.

Only when we receive clear reports do we issue passports ? Every effort is made to ascertain the nationality of the applicants and, therefore, only after thorough enquiries by the State Police authorities concerned all decisions are taken with regard to the issue of Passports.

Survey of forest area in the country

*258. SHRI JAGADISH JANI : MISS SAROJ KHAPARADE :

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) when was the last survey on the forest area in the country made ;

(b) what is the total forest area in the country according to the last survey;

(c) whether forest area in the country has been dwindling due to large scale deforestation ;

(d) if so, the total forest area that has been degraded ; and

(e) the steps being taken to check the unabated felling of trees ?

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI RAJIV GANDHI) : (a) The last comprehensive compilation of areas registered as forest was done for the year 1981-82.

(b) According to this, the total forest area in the country was 74.72 million hectares.

(c) Yes, Sir.